KINGSTON

Women of the year AWARDS

THURSDAY 5 MARCH 2026

Celebrating International Women's Day

City of KINGSTON

KINGSTON AWARDS 2026

Acknowledgment of Country

The City of Kingston proudly acknowledges the Bunurong People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land, and we pay our respect to their Elders, past and present.

Council acknowledges the Bunurong's continuing relationship to the land and waterways and respects that their connection and spiritual identity is maintained through ancient ceremonies, song-lines, dance, art and living culture.

Council pays tribute to the invaluable contributions of the Bunurong and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elders who have guided and continue to guide the work we do.

Mayor's Message

Welcome, and thank you for being part of this special celebration as we mark International Women's Day and honour the remarkable women and girls who help shape Kingston.

Each year, our Women of the Year Awards remind me just how fortunate we are to live in a community filled with courage, compassion and leadership. For the eighth year running, we gather at Kingston City Hall to recognise women whose quiet determination and bold action alike are strengthening our city in so many ways.

This year's International Women's Day theme, Balance the Scales, is both a call to action and a shared promise. It reminds us that every woman and girl deserves to feel safe, to be heard, and to have the freedom to shape her own future.

While we have made important progress, inequality, discrimination and gender-based violence are still realities for too many, and structural barriers continue to limit opportunity and access to justice. But these barriers are not inevitable, together we can dismantle them.

Balancing the scales is about ensuring dignity, safety and fairness for all. When women and girls stand equal, families are stronger, workplaces are more inclusive, and communities like ours thrive.

Through these awards, we are proud to shine a light on the many ways women across Kingston are already helping to create that fairer future.

To every nominee and award recipient - thank you. Your leadership and generosity inspire us to keep striving for a more equal and just community.

This International Women's Day, let's continue working together to Balance the Scales, here in Kingston and beyond.

Georgina L Oxley

Cr Georgina Oxley
Mayor, City of Kingston

Order of Proceedings

Welcome Speech
MC Shwetha Shankar

Welcome to Country
Bunurong Land Council

Mayoral Address
Mayor Cr Georgina Oxley

Speech by Two Young Leaders
Emma Schultz & Kavya Subramaniam

Presentation of Nominees and Award Recipient
Young Woman of the Year

Presentation of Nominees and Award Recipient
Courageous Commitment

Dance Performance
Mzuri Dance

Keynote Speaker
Shelley Ware

Deputy Mayoral Address
Cr Sarah O'Donnell

Presentation of Nominees and Award Recipient
Excelling in Arts or Sports

Presentation of Nominees and Award Recipient
Impact in STEM or Innovation

Dance Performance
Mzuri Dance

Women of the Year 2025 reflections
Dr. Nirali Shah and Leanne Maloni

Presentation of 2026 Overall Women of the Year

Refreshments after the ceremony

Carol O'Halloran

Carol is the founder and presenter of *Over 50, So What!*, a C31 TV show supporting people transitioning into retirement. With 35 years' experience working with older Australians, she champions wellbeing, inclusion and age positivity. At nearly 70, she continues to volunteer full-time producing and promoting the show.

Chantra Fejes

Chantra is the owner of Toast IT! Moorabbin and the driving force behind the annual "Pink It Up" fundraiser for the McGrath Foundation. Through community-led events, she brings locals and businesses together to support cancer patients and nurses. Her leadership has created a much-loved annual tradition in Moorabbin.

Emma Howey

Emma is the Director of Chelsea Occasional Childcare, where her leadership saved the centre from closure and transformed it into a thriving learning community. She champions creativity, sustainability and strong family partnerships. Under her guidance, the centre fosters belonging, curiosity and growth for every child.

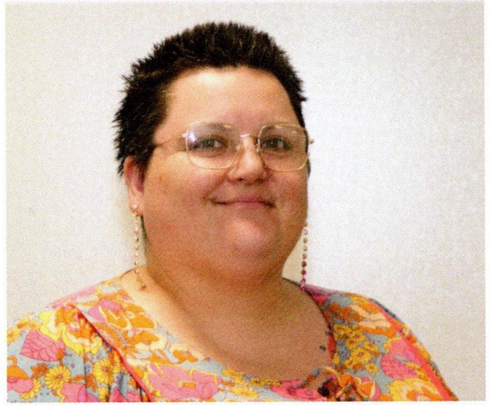
Emmy Heikamp

Emmy is the co-founder of Dutch Cargo Bike, championing sustainable, car-free transport for Australian families. Through innovative business models and community initiatives, she has helped thousands replace car trips with bike trips. Her work promotes healthier communities and a circular approach to mobility.

Gabriela Ammendola

Gabriela is the Founder and Director of GA Industrial and a respected leader in a male-dominated industry. An immigrant entrepreneur, she combines business success with deep community service through major charity events, domestic violence support and mentoring migrant women. Her leadership is defined by courage, generosity and impact.

Hannah Daniels

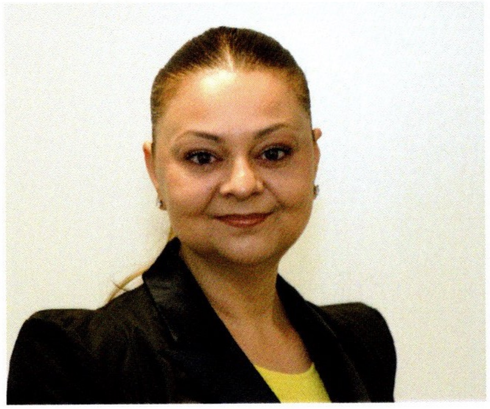


Hannah is the founder of Hannah's Haven, a Kingston-based cat rescue that has rehomed and desexed over 1,000 cats in four years. She dedicates countless volunteer hours to animal welfare, education and rescue. Despite personal health challenges, her compassion and commitment never waver.

Kathryn Berry

Kathryn is a long-serving volunteer with St John Ambulance Kingston Division. Alongside her career as a registered nurse, she dedicates hundreds of hours each year to community first aid and volunteer leadership. Her calm, compassionate presence strengthens community safety.

Marina Kyriakou



Marina is the Founder and CEO of Fight ENDO Foundation and Adenomyosis Australia. Turning personal adversity into advocacy, she has built national platforms for education, support and systemic health reform. Her leadership empowers women to be seen, heard and supported.

Odri Fernandes

I carry this nomination with gratitude for every woman who has faced challenges with courage and every hand that has supported me along the way.

Our journeys may be personal, but our strength is always collective.

– Odri Fernandes

Odri is a co-founder of Essor Business Hub and creator of the Biz Growth Network, supporting multicultural entrepreneurs through business, wellness and connection. Her work builds belonging, resilience and leadership across diverse communities. What began as a vision has grown into a statewide movement.

Julie Mullins

Julie is an inspiring science educator and Head of Department at Parkdale Secondary College. She champions girls in STEM through targeted programs, curriculum innovation and real-world learning partnerships. Her leadership is shaping confident, curious future scientists.

Monika Mehta

Monika is a Senior Manager at Schneider Electric and a leader in sustainability and energy analytics. Alongside her global professional role, she supports cultural connection and leadership as a community group leader. She is a role model for women balancing leadership, family and service.

Nally Pillay

Being nominated for the Kingston Women of the Year Award is incredibly special. I'm proud and humbled to stand alongside remarkable women and to champion and inspire the next generation of leaders in our community.

– Nally Pillay

Nally is the founder of the We Rise Kingston branch, creating inclusive networking opportunities for women in business. Through locally focused events and partnerships, she has built a thriving support ecosystem for female entrepreneurs. Her leadership strengthens Kingston's local economy and community connections.

Rebecca Purvis

Rebecca is the Founder of OT Group, a nationally recognised allied health organisation. Under her leadership, OT Group has delivered innovative, inclusive services and built a strong culture of wellbeing and excellence. Her work empowers independence for people living with disability.

Vivianne Rodrigues

Vivianne is the founder of PinkChic Hair Care and Liss Brazil Nanoplasty, a fast-growing haircare brand across Australia and New Zealand. After overcoming domestic violence, she built a successful business that empowers women through education and employment. Her leadership has been nationally recognised, including winning the 2025 AusMumpreneur Award.

Jessica Adkins-Barber

Jessica is the owner of The Little Swim School and a leader in trauma-informed, neuroinclusive aquatic education. Her innovative programs support over 700 swimmers and influence industry standards statewide. She also leads inclusive community sport and delivers free water-safety education across Kingston.

Leah Percy

Leah is the Head Coach at Edithvale Aspendale Eagles Netball Club and a passionate youth mentor. Through coaching, clinics and school programs, she builds confidence, inclusion and leadership in young athletes. Her influence spans multiple sports and age groups.

Rachel Parkinson

Rachel is the founder of Little Feet Music, a nationally recognised early childhood music program running for over 20 years. Despite major health challenges, she has introduced thousands of children to joyful, confidence-building music education. Her work continues to shape young learners across Australia.

"I'm so excited to have been nominated for the Women of the Year from Kingston Council and I look forward to sharing the joy and love of music to many more families in the future.

– Rachel Parkinson

Young Woman of the Year

Anastasia Bearsley

Anastasia (Anna) is a 22-year-old emerging leader and advocate for inclusion, accessibility and the arts. As Co-Chair of the Better Health Network Community Advisory Board, she amplifies lived experience in health services and champions mental health and wellbeing. She also volunteers to reduce social isolation among older residents, creating accessible pathways to arts and culture.

“Though being nominated for the Woman of the Year (Rising Star Award) is an incredible honour, saying so also feels like a vast understatement. I have been shaped by the communities around me, and this recognition belongs just as much to the people who have supported, challenged and believed in me along the way.

– Anastasia Bearsley

Ashleigh Wilson

Ashleigh is an emerging nursing leader dedicated to providing equitable and compassionate healthcare. A Registered Nurse at The Alfred, she researches homelessness and healthcare access, volunteers extensively with St John Ambulance and Street Side Medics, and has co-designed innovative nursing curricula. Her work reflects strong social justice values and leadership beyond her years.

Charlotte Lionnet

Charlotte is a dedicated volunteer leader with the Australian Air Force Cadets, contributing over 100 days of unpaid service each year. She mentors young people aged 13–18, building leadership, resilience and confidence through aviation and life-skills training. Her commitment has positively shaped the lives of more than 500 cadets.

Previous award recipients

Women of the Year

2025
Leanne Maloni
Dr. Nirali Shah

2024
Amy Salisbury
Nimita Bagadia

2023
Adrianne Fleming OAM

2022
Bronwyn Currie
Paula Westhead

2021
Simone Hardham

2020
June Rea

2019
Emma Gierschick OAM

Category winners

2025
Ria Breider
Monica Cashin
Brenda Robinson
Vanessa Henry

2024
Evelyn Townley & Gwyn Nichols
Kerrie Waworis
Dr Carolyn Beaumont
Dr Kate Robb

2023
Aunty Katrina Amon
Jess McKenna
Michelle Kornberg
Harini Karthikeyan

2022
Anne Grigg
Sandra Davies OAM
Dolly Bhargava
Nidhi Shah

2021
Megan King
Vanessa Heredia
Arna O'Connell
Joan Bradd

Scan here!
To view all previous award winners or visit **kingston.vic.gov.au/awards**

KINGSTON AWARDS 2026

Kingston Women of the Year Awards are presented as part of Kingston's Annual Awards Program.

- Women of the Year Awards
- Sustainable Business Awards
- Youth Awards
- Community Awards